

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 10659

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR

SUBJ: SOVIET SCULPTOR NEIZVESTNY'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT KEKKONEN

REF: MOSCOW 9751 (NOTAL)

1. SOVIET SCULPTOR ERNST NEIZVESTNY, WHO WAS RECENTLY REFUSED PERMISSION TO EMIGRATE TO ISRAEL (REFTEL), GAVE EMBOFF A COPY OF A LETTER HE HAD SENT ON JULY 25 TO FINNISH PRESIDENT KEKKONEN. (NEIZVESTNY SAYS THAT THE LETTER HAS ARRIVED.) IN HIS LETTER HE SETS FORTH HIS REASONS FOR SEEKING TO EMIGRATE, STATEING THAT HE DID SO ONLY AFTER HAVING BEEN REFUSED THE CHANCE TO TRAVEL TO THE WEST AND RETURN. HE ADDS THAT THOUGH HE HAS HIS WIFE'S PERMISSION TO LEAVE, THE AUTHORITIES ARE INSISTING ON A FORMAL DIVORCE, AND GOES ON TO EXPLAIN THAT THE DIVORCE IS BUT ONE OF MANY POSSIBLE OBSTACLES THAT CAN BE USED TO PREVENT HIM FROM LEAVING. HE APPEALS TO KEKKONEN FOR SUPPORT AND ATTENTION AS AN UNDERSTANDING MAN MOTIVATED BY POLITICAL AS WELL AS HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS AND ONE INTERESTED IN THE FATES OF DESERVING PEOPLE.

2. NEIZVESTNY COMMENTED THAT WHILE HE HAD OBVIOUSLY CHOSEN KEKKONEN BECAUSE OF THE OCCASION OF THE CSCE SUMMIT, HE HAD A SECOND REASON FOR DOING SO.

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KEKKONEN HAD BEEN GIVEN (BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT)

ONE OF NEIZVESTNY'S WORKS, AND HAD CORRESPONDED IN THE PAST WITH THE SCULPTOR. IT IS THIS PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP THAT HAS LED NEIZVESTNY TO BELIEVE THAT HIS APPEAL MIGHT RECEIVE MORE ATTENTION THAN WOULD NORMALLY BE THE CASE. NEIZVESTNY SAYS THAT HE HAS TOLD THE WESTERN PRESS CORPS (MEMBERS OF WHICH CONFIRM THIS) ABOUT THE LETTER IN ORDER TO USE THE PRESS AS ANOTHER MEANS OF SEEKING TO ASSURE THAT HIS CASE BE DISCUSSED AT THE SUMMIT. HE SAYS THAT HE HAS NOW DECIDED THAT MAXIMUM PUBLICITY IS THE ONLY WAY THAT HE IS GOING TO GET OUT, AND WHILE HE DOES NOT THINK THAT THE APPEAL TO KEKKONEN WILL OF ITSELF BE SUCCESSFUL, HE DOES THINK THAT IT WILL BE A USEFUL FIRST STEP.

3. COMMENT: SEVERAL MEMBERS OF MOSCOW'S DISSIDENT COMMUNITY FEEL THAT THE AUTHORITIES WILL INDEED RELENT, AND THAT NEIZVESTNY STANDS AN EXCELLENT CHANCE OF BEING OUT WITHIN A YEAR. THEIR REASONING IS THAT HE HAS NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT, AND HAS NOT BEEN PROMINENT AS A JEW. HE IS, THEY THINK, MORE TROUBLE TO THE AUTHORITIES IF HE REMAINS HERE THAN IF THEY LET HIM GO. THE ONLY SPECIAL REASON THAT HAS BEEN ADDUCED FOR HINDERING HIS EXIT IS THAT HE WAS, AFTER ALL, ONE OF THE USSR'S MOST PROMINENT OFFICIAL SCULPTORS AND THAT IT WOULD BE EXCEPTIONALLY GALLING TO THE AUTHORITIES TO PERMIT HIM TO LEAVE.
MATLOCK

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